THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) Ministry of Health and Family Welfare *vide* their Gazette Notification GSR 554 (E) dated 18th July, 2003 have prescribed revised maximum residue limits for pesticide residues in the packaged drinking water which will be effective from 1st January, 2004. No changes have been made in respect of packaged natural mineral water.

(b) All licensees for packaged drinking water have been informed by Bureau of Indian Standards for taking appropriate action for ensuring implementation of revised norms of pesticide residues as laid down in Ministry of Health and Family Welfare's Gazette Notification GSR 554(E) dated 18th July, 2003.

(c) Taking cognizance of the report published by Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) regarding presence of pesticide residues in the bottled water, BIS concerned Technical Committee reviewed the specification for packaged drinking water and packaged natural mineral water being high priced value added products and decided to amend the limits for pesticide residues to bring it in line with the best in the world (EU norms) in order to protect the consumer interests.

Cases pending in consumer courts

†1737. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the total number of cases registered and pending in various consumer courts;

(b) the reasons for the delay in disposal of the cases;

(c) whether any decision has been taken by the Commission to constitute more benches in order to dispose off the consumer cases rapidly; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI V. SREENIVASA PRASAD): (a) As per the information made available by the National

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

Commission, as on date, the number of cases filed, disposed and pending; since inception, in the National Commission, State Commissions and District Forums are stated below:

Consumer Courts	Cases filed since inception	Cases disposed since inception	Disposal percentage	Cases pending
National Commission	31,275	23,510	75.17%	7765
State Commissions	2,85,099	1,85,804	65.17%	99295
District Forums	18,17,861	15,72,641	86.51%	245220

(b) The disposal of cases by the consumer disputes redressal agencies in the country is mainly affected by the inadequate infrastructure, adjournments, non-filling up of the posts of the Presidents/Members in the consumer disputes redressal agencies. To remove these obstacles, some of the important steps taken for the speedy disposal of cases by these agencies are as under:—

(i) One-Time-Grant of Rs. 61.80 crores provided to the States/ UTs by the Central Government to supplement their efforts to strengthen the infrastructure of the consumer disputes redressal agencies;

(ii) Monitoring of the working of consumer disputes redressal agencies through the National Commission;

(iii) States and Union Territories requested to take prompt steps to fill up vacant posts of President/Member in the consumer disputes redressal agencies and maintain a panel of suitable candidates for appointment as President/Member;

(iv) The Consumer Protection Act, 1986 has recently been amended in 2002 mainly to facilitate the quicker disposal of complaints by enhancing the capabilities of the consumer forums, strengthening them with more powers, streamlining the procedures and widening the scope of the Act. A provision has also been incorporated in the amendment to empower the senior-most Member to perform as President in the absence of the regular President of the National Commission, State Commission and the District Forum for smooth and uninterrupted functioning of these forums.

(c) and (d) The second Bench of the National Commission has been constituted which has started functioning with effect from 24th September, 2003 to dispose off the consumer cases rapidly.

Procurement of paddy in Uttar Pradesh

†1738. SHRI HARENDRA SINGH MALIK: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Supreme Court has passed any order on the 29th August, 2003 regarding procurement of paddy in Uttar Pradesh;

(b) if so, whether the State Government is implementing the orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in procurement of paddy; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Th Hon'ble Supreme Court in its order, dated 29.8.2003 has considered the order passed by the High Court at Lucknow on a writ petition seeking certain reliefs in respect of paddy procurement policy of the Government of Uttar Pradesh and after consideration set aside the orders of the High Court and referred the matter to the High Court for fresh consideration. The matter is presently sub-judice in the High Court. The State Government of Uttar Pradesh has indicated that all previous orders issued by the High Court in the matter have been scrupulously implemented and the State Government has been procuring paddy as per approved specifications at MSP through its agencies.

Assistance to cane-growers

1739. SHRI KALRAJ MISHRA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government had approved a Rs. 678.06 crore one time assistance package for sugarcane growers;

(b) if so, the details of the scheme, indicating nature and extent of assistance given to cane-growers and its *modus operandi;* and

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.